

# Bibliography

## NEPALI AND NEPAL BHASA LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION: A REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### Introduction: Notes for an Informed Translation of Nepali Literature

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In 1997 we published a bibliography of writings on Nepali women in conjunction with a collection of commentaries and reflections on Nepali women's movements (SINHAS 2(2):406-33). The present bibliography accompanies Manjushree Thapa's article *With Love and Aesthetics: Notes for an Ethical Translation of Nepali Literature*. The general impetus behind such bibliographies is to ease the way for readers interested in further reading. The earlier bibliography, as we noted, was certainly not exhaustive, though it was extensive. The same can be said of this one.

Translations of Nepali and Nepal Bhasa (Newari) literature, for reasons touched on in Thapa's article (this volume), are often published by small presses and/or in relatively obscure periodicals. And many are out of print. This makes compilation of a bibliography more difficult; its value concomitantly greater.<sup>2</sup> It is, to our knowledge, the first such compilation. As such it allows us to survey the terrain of translation.

- 1 With thanks to the editors of *RE:AL*, *The Minnesota Review*, *Seneca Review* and the *Journal of South Asian Literature* for help in completing entries that appeared in their publications, to Wayne Amtzis, Larry Hartsell, Ann Hunkins, Michael Hutt, and Manjushree Thapa for providing or completing citations for some of their own work, and to Ramesh Parajuli, Manjushree Thapa, Deepak Thapa and especially Pratyoush Onta for help in completing various entries.
- 2 The section of this bibliography on writings in English *about* literature is particularly incomplete and skewed to more recent publications. We felt that it would still be of use to readers to include it here, but we intend to provide a more complete bibliography on this topic in the future.

far, translation with "illustrative intent", on its effects on the language of translation, and on other possibilities.

But more, or better (in Thapa's terms more *ethical*), translation into English does not resolve the broader socio-political issue she raises:

it is undeniable that in Nepal, there are very real power imbalances between the English and Nepali languages, and between the Nepali language and other national tongues. Migration between languages does not occur here without pain. ... despite the fact that there are few Nepalis for whom English is a mother tongue, the language occupies a startlingly privileged position as compared to the country's other languages. This fact, and the context of contemporary language politics, both raise ethical concerns for the English translator of Nepali literature (Thapa, this volume).

Finely crafted translations in a deeply *Nepali* English would still be accessible to few, indeed genuinely accessible to even fewer within Nepal given the deep grasp of a language needed to appreciate texts that stretch its reach, devise neologisms, experiment at the boundaries of its possibilities. In this sense what we would surely count, in literary terms, as better translations, can only compound the dilemma she describes, of engaging in the furtherance of a language of privilege. Which returns us directly to the issue of cross-translation among Nepal's other languages, work that already takes place under conditions generally considerably more difficult than those of English translation from Nepali (or even Nepal Bhasa), however "marginalized" the latter may be on a world scale. Contemplate a situation in which Nepali literature, through its translation, were to achieve a place comparable to that of, say, Bengali, Czech, or Urdu in the world literatures scene. What might be the effect on cross-translation between Nepali languages? Perhaps, at best, none, but it seems far more likely it would further marginalize such efforts. At least without conscious intervention.

"What", as Thapa asks, "is the English translator to do"? Neither giving up on English translation, which is to give up on making a rich literary tradition available to a great number of people worldwide, nor striving for mediocrity so as not to overshadow translation into and from the less dominant languages of Nepal seem like desirable solutions. But neither does ignoring this effect strike me as possible in a world of *ethical* translation. When we acknowledge the act of literary translation to be also an act of cultural translation, a moment's contemplation of the social terrain tells us that Nepali is the dominant national language and that English, as Thapa says, "occupies a startlingly privileged position"

Viewed from this angle we can say that translation from dominance into startling privilege, however well it may be done, clearly does not exhaust the responsibilities of an ethical translator. I suggest that there are several ways to address this problem besides sticking our heads in the sand.

The first, least satisfactory solution, but one that holds its own significance, is to also engage in translation into English from other languages besides Nepali. Nepal Bhasa is thus far the only language that has received any sustained attention of this kind.<sup>4</sup> In some cases the potential body of work for translation is very small (itself no argument against translation), but in others such as Maithili, Bhojpuri and Limbu, that is not the case. Though not every translator will have the requisite linguistic skills to take up this option, there is the possibility of collaborative work. Moreover, a growing body of literature from other languages of Nepal is being translated into Nepali. Such works are easy to find in the many "*janajati*" magazines in the market. There are also collections of translations appearing.<sup>5</sup> Thus there is also the possibility of second-order translation, work that presents its own special difficulties and almost demands collaborative translation.

I see two kinds of significance to such work. First, just as the politics of the Nepali literature that is translated makes a cumulative impression in English, so too does overwhelmingly *Nepali* translation. It says: Nepal is the land of Nepali speakers, its literature *is* Nepali literature. We all know this is both true and not true—that it is also the land of speakers of

4 The bibliography published here does not willfully ignore translations from other languages of Nepal. Except for one or two cases (e.g. Lal 1995 under Poetry in Periodicals) we simply did not find literary translations from other languages into English. While there may be some, they are evidently few. Where one will find translations from other languages is in the Folklore and Oral Literature section. The significance of this fact is reflected upon below.

5 See, for example, Acharya (2053 v.s.) for translations into Nepali of Bhojpuri stories, Kainla (2049 v.s.:173-213) for Limbu stories and poems translated by Bairagi Kainla. The journal *Sayapatri*, which publishes each piece in both Nepali and another language of Nepal according to subject matter (one or the other being a translation) is also a good source. See, for example, the story by Rameshkumar Tamang, in both Nepali and Tamang (Tamang 2053v.s.ka,kha), Phurumbo and Tamling (2052ka,kha) for folktales in both Limbu and Nepali, and the striking example of translation from one 'Nepali' into another—a Baitadi Nepali story (Sijapati 2052v.s.ka,kha). There also exist older works, such as I.M. Chemjong's translation of the main Limbu sacred text into Nepali (Chemjong, 1961).

Though each and every translation has not been tracked down, we feel confident that this bibliography reveals the main trends in translation over time.

Besides its utility as a list, then, read as a narrative in conjunction with Thapa's article it should also relay some tales about the social history of translation, especially for those familiar with the much larger literary corpus from which these translations emerge. Who has been/is being translated (and who is not)? Who translates whom? Within an author's *oeuvre*, which works have been translated (and which have not)? What trends are observable over time? What presses and periodicals publish literature of Nepal in translation? What sort of 'canon' of Nepali literature in English is effectively being created by these scattered acts of translation?

Those interested in pursuing the questions about choices internal to translation raised in Manjushree Thapa's essay, can use this bibliography to locate multiple translations of a single work.<sup>3</sup> Or, simply by reading the work of various translators, a sense can be gained of the variety of theories of translation that, implicitly or explicitly, shape the works which stand for 'Nepali Literature' in English. The bibliography also brings out patterns and partnerships—who works alone, who collaborates, who self-translates, which pieces have the benefit of a native speaker of each language involved in the translation; are there discernible differences in the results? The bibliography often (though not always) informs about which translators are themselves poets or fiction writers and which are not. A reader interested in the question of whether it "takes one to translate one" can compare translations selected by this criteria. Used in these and other ways, it is our hope that this compilation will contribute to producing both better translation and more critical readers of translation.

How instructive the bibliography is for our readers thus depends on how creatively they choose to use it. But certainly it has been instructive simply to compile, leading me to reflect on two aspects of the issue, raised in Thapa's article, of the place of English translation within the political landscape of Nepal. The first aspect is the political slant of the cumulative body of translated work. A browse through the bibliography will make it clear that the literature of the left ('progressive literature' in

3 Unfortunately, not all of these will be immediately apparent as we were unable to include detailed contents for anthologies and collections of short fiction and poetry.

the terms of Nepali literary criticism) makes scant appearance in English translation. One does not find, for example, the poetry of Balbhadra Bharati, Rupchand Bista, Deviprasad Kisan, Yuddhaprasad Mishra, Matrika Pokhrel or Purna Viram, nor the fiction of Rishi Raj Baral, Ghanshyam Dhakal, Ichchhuk, Ismaili, Khagendra Sangraula, or Devika Timilsina. Gopalprasad Rimal gets relatively little attention from translators; Parijat might be taken for a minor figure of the Nepali literary world were one to judge by her place in the landscape of Nepal-in-Translation.

There can be many reasons for this situation, from the political proclivities of translators to their assessments of literary worth (not, I would note, entirely unrelated matters). But even were one to assume that the, politically speaking, middle-of-the-road tendency in translation choices were a matter of happenstance or wholly to do with literary criteria, the key point in terms of the issue Thapa raises is that the result is very specific: progressive literature barely registers in translation. As she points out, English is a language of power in Nepal. She urges translators to be alert to the fact that, with each choice of text for translation that they make, they are significantly contributing to the formation of an English language Nepali literature canon. The effects of translation into a language of power that she urges us to worry about are compounded by the relative absence of progressive literature in English translation. Regardless of what text a translator ultimately chooses for translation, informed translation needs to take account of participation in the creation of a body of work with a particular politics—and every piece of Nepali literature has its politics—in a language of power.

The second aspect that Thapa's article and the compilation of this bibliography have led me to reflect on has to do not with the politics of literature, but with the politics of languages. Thapa poses the question, "What is the English translator to do about the fact that she is not just a product, but an agent of English in Nepal, helping to spread a language which easily marginalizes national languages?". In this context she explores questions of language interior to the act of translation. She discusses, for example, the possibilities of indigenizing English, a process more deeply realized in the English literature and translations into English of many other countries—one need only think about English literary works from India, the Caribbean, Africa or Latin America for example. Readers who use the bibliography to track down works by a range of translators will have before them a substantial body of work with which to reflect on what Thapa identifies as the dominant practice thus

many other tongues, the home of other literatures. But do readers of Nepal's literature in translation know that *from the work they read*? Second, in the context of Nepal's language politics, a Magar language poem say, or a Bantawa story travels a much longer and more arduous path to arrive into English translation. Precisely due to the status of English in Nepal today, such translations could have a counter-hegemonic effect rather than the hegemonic effect that is the tendency of translation from Nepali into English.

The second kind of (partial) solution to the dilemma of the English translator that I propose here leaves behind English altogether. Consider the case of translation into Nepali<sup>6</sup> from other languages of Nepal. For English translators with the linguistic capability, simply to engage in such translation is an evident avenue of action. For those without such capability (and for anyone the number of languages would be limited), there is always the possibility of collaboration. Nor can the ethical translator retire before the fact by saying they wouldn't know where to begin. One good place would be the dual language state-of-literature articles being published in the journal *Sayapatni* on the literatures of other languages of Nepal.<sup>7</sup> Such guides are also to be found in Nepali in *janajati* magazines, and in various other publications.<sup>8</sup> Resources like these provide but a starting point, but then such work is also only at its beginning.

A further step along this road would be for English translators to devote some of their effort to translation from Nepali into other languages of Nepal. For the need for circulation in both directions is equally pressing. Both these endeavors that leave English aside present evident and

- 6 Or translation into Nepal Bhasa. I do not know what, if any translation into Nepal Bhasa may be taking place. The possibilities proposed here would, however, apply equally to that case.
- 7 See for example, Magar (2052v.s.ka, kha) and Pokhrel (2053v.s.ka,kha) on Magar literature, Sharma (2052v.s.ka,kha) on Bhojpuri literature; Premarshi (2052v.s.ka,kha) on Maithili literature. Some articles take one further, like the discussion of the language of husband-wife exchanges in Maithili which draws upon three Maithili plays for its material (Yadav 2052v.s.ka,kha). There are also visual possibilities, like the Tamu *pye* painted on the walls and pillars of the Pokhara museum in the headquarters of the *Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh* in Nepali/English and Chō Kyui.
- 8 See for example, Kainla (2049 v.s.: 117-170) for a bibliography of the contents of Limbu language journals and magazines (1987-1991) in which contents are distinguished by genre; Acharya (2053 v.s.) for a discussion of Bhojpuri prose literature.

new challenges, the greatest of them linguistic. The hierarchy of languages in Nepal will not be overturned by our scattered acts of translation, yet here and there a preconception or two may be—not least of them our own. For it seems inevitable that in the course of such work the English translator's relation to Nepal—whatever it may be at the outset—would be altered, and altered in the direction of making her a more nuanced translator of Nepali language literature as well.

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शर्मा, विश्वम्भर कुमार । २०१२ख । नेपालमा भोजपुरी साहित्यको स्थिति । गोपाल ठाकुर, अनु । *सयपत्री* १(१): ११३-११८ ।  
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 सिजापति, रामविक्रम । २०१२ख । तुङ्गले मुझलाई नाइ पछ्याए ? (२०१२क को बैतडेली भाषिका अनुवाद), रामविक्रम सिजापति, अनु । *सयपत्री* १(३): ८३-८६ ।

### The Reference Bibliography: Organization and Contents

As far as possible the name of the translator(s) is included in each entry. Dates given are the date of publication of the translation, not the original work. In almost every case the entry is under the name of the author of the original work. The few exceptions are translations printed within volumes that are original works by another author. Original titles are given in square brackets only where the work under translation would not be discernible from the title of the translation. Where the original work was available to us at the time of compilation and it seemed useful, parenthetical notes about contents have been added. Where possible, forthcoming translations are included. The bibliography is divided into six sections. Contents and rationale of each section are as follows:

**I. Novels, Plays, Anthologies, Edited Volumes:** This section is primarily composed of translations that form (singly or collectively) a complete volume in themselves. It also includes a few edited volumes and other works that contain a text in translation. Both poetry and short stories, except for those in periodicals, are found in this section. Some also include writing about literature and have a double entry in Section VI.

**II. Poetry in Periodicals:** Poems are given separate entries except those translated by the same person(s) and appearing on consecutive pages. A few poems that appeared in *The Nepal Digest*, an on-line publication are included.

**III. Short Stories in Periodicals.**

**IV. Plays, Essays and Excerpts from Novels...:** This is, in a sense, the miscellany section of works that did not fit elsewhere. For readers of the bibliography, this may however, prove informative. Plays in periodicals appear here only because so few have been published that they didn't warrant a separate section. Although *nibandha* is a vital genre

within Nepali literature, we found few essays in translation. Similarly, biographies of literary figures do not appear to be garnering translation.

**V. Folklore, Tales, Oral Literature...:** This section introduces another stream of translation and is intended to juxtapose "high literature" and folk. There are several reasons for its inclusion: i) a good deal of the material translated is from languages other than Nepali, ii) translation in the folktales genre tends to the extreme end of free translation while much of the oral literature is translated by anthropologists for distinctly illustrative purposes (though there are exceptions to this). The styles of both should be worth reflecting on in comparison with literary translation, and iii) the material itself stands in sharp contrast to that of much of the translated literary work and thus brings out other story-telling voices of Nepal. Some works that contain only minor amounts of direct translation (even none in a few cases) are included for the reflections they contain on the nature of oral literature or the task of translating it. Besides folk and oral literature, translations of religious texts are also included in this section, along with a small amount of material on music.

**VI. Writings about Literature:** This section is almost wholly comprised of pieces originally written in English. It represents, if you like, the English literary criticism of Nepali literature. However, older writings are distinctly underrepresented. We intend to publish a supplement in the future. This section can be approached with the same kinds of questions in mind as those posed in the preceding introduction with regard to translations.

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9 When using this bibliography it should be recalled that all dates are the date of publication of the translation, not the original work.

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- Bista, Somdhvaj. 1994. *The Adulterer's Women*. E. Ann Hunkins, transl. *Journal of South Asian Literature* 29(1): 77-85.
- Brajaki, Manu. 1995. *Home Coming*. M.H. Ansari and Mukul Dahal, transl. *Nepal Letters* 1(4): 4-9.
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12 For bibliographic purposes these three poems constitute a reprint from *Journal of South Asian Literature* 31/32 (1996/7). In practice however, that volume is going to press in early 2000, hence the poems were first published in *Nepal Letters*.

13 Ramesh Bikal appears as Ramesh Vikal in Section I. In general one commonly encounters the following variations in transliteration in some occurrences of certain nagri letters: b/v; v/w; ksh/x; u/oo; i/ee; hri/tri; au/ou; i/y; sh/s, m/n.

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#### IV. Plays, Essays and Excerpts from Novels in Periodicals, Biographies of Literary Figures in English Translation

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#### V. Folklore, Tales and Songs, Oral Literature, and Religious Literature in English Translation<sup>14</sup>

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14 In this section some works are listed that may include only a small amount of translation. They are included because they should be informative for anyone thinking about how oral literature enters into the world of writing. The section may thus be taken as a combined guide to translations and to writings about folklore, music, etc. It should, however, be understood to be a small selection in the latter category. Although this bibliography is limited to translations into English, we wish to bring to notice one (of few) translations into other languages discovered in the course of its preparation— a small collection of Nepali folktales in Vietnamese translation: Thu Thuy. 1985. *Bà già trong qua bầu: truyện cổ Nê-pan*. Series: Truyện cổ thế giới chọn lọc. Hà Nội: Kim Đồng.

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15 Unfortunately, we have been able to include only a few entries from this journal. It should be noted as one source for translations of *nibandha* (essays) which, as Section V. shows, appear to be a particularly underrepresented genre in translation.

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